

CFP: Special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* on “Cultural AI”
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Deadline for proposals: November 30, 2024

The recent and seemingly ubiquitous rise of Generative AI models, such as Chat-GPT, has created a tidal wave of uncertainty in the humanities and creative industries. While some fiction writers, such as Sheila Heti and Ken Liu, have started to adopt LLMs as writing tools, many others voice doubts about the integration of Large Language Models (LLMs) into their writing process; they acknowledge biases in datasets, a lack of consent involved in obtaining data, environmental harms, and exploitative labor practices. The concerns of artists are not so different from the concerns among humanists whose attitudes toward generative AI have largely been critical. Indeed, “Critical AI” names the dominant humanities-based approach to studying AI and its applications. It foregrounds political economy, ideology critique, social biases, and rightly deflates the hype emanating from leading AI companies.

Our special issue on “**Cultural AI**,” while indebted to this work, names and demonstrates an alternative approach to humanistic engagement with artificial intelligence. To borrow a phrase from Dipesh Chakrabarty, we believe that critique is both “indispensable and inadequate” to understanding the impact of generative AI on the objects, methods, institutions and pedagogy of the humanities. Computational expressive cultures precede our current iteration of transformer-based AI systems, but they will no doubt grow exponentially in the years to come with the development and adoption of LLMs and multimodal models across various and many industries. We need to understand AI as a cultural technology that is here to stay. This includes analyzing contemporary AI’s relationship to earlier historical versions of automatic text generation, such as Theo Lutz’s *Stochastic Texts* for example, as well as how LLMs are enabling aesthetic innovation and asking novel conceptual questions about the uniqueness of human beings, the nature of interiority, and the meaning of craft.

Overall, this special issue on “Cultural AI” regards the task before humanists as three-fold: to analyze the impact of generative AI on the writing, reading, and philosophy of fiction; to understand how we might use this technology to study fiction; and to shape the broader public and intellectual discourse over the proper role of AI in everyday life specifically as it pertains to domains of art, writing, and culture.

We seek to assemble a special issue on AI and culture that combines critical approaches with affordance-based ones. We welcome papers that take LLM and generative AI models as objects of cultural study, as well as those that use these models to analyze literary fiction and fiction-adjacent activities such as virtual reality, videogames, online culture, and chatbot creation. We also welcome methodological papers that illustrate and/or reflect on the affordances and

challenges of using generative AI models to study and teach literature. We are thus very interested in papers that are *at once* critical and applied.

Potential topics include:

- 1) Fictionality: The “rise of fictionality” remains a much-discussed topic in literary studies especially among scholars of the earlier periods of literary history. What is the “rise of Generative AI” doing to contemporary understandings of fictionality? In turn, can literary, philosophical, or transmedial conceptions of fictionality help make sense of the outputs of language models and multimodal models?
- 2) How do generative AI and large language models potentially encode new theoretical problems and frameworks for literary studies, and how do such frameworks help to revivify long-standing theories in the discipline, such as structuralism, deconstruction, new historicism, etc?
- 3) Keywords or major concepts from Literary Theory or Cultural Studies that have explanatory or theoretical power over developments and implementations in Generative AI; how can literary and cultural theory potentially help us rethink or reform the creation and use of common AI models?
- 4) Data-driven and computational approaches that adopt LLMs for literary and/or cultural study.
- 5) Co-intelligence: Does co-intelligence give us new purchase on critical concepts essential to the study of modern fiction, such as *originality*, *authorial intention*, and *individuality*? Is co-intelligence a form of skilling or deskilling for the literary arts and how might it shape new styles, forms, and publishing environments for contemporary fiction?
- 6) Decolonized, indigenous, or global South approaches, both critical and practice-based, to generative AI and data sovereignty.
- 7) Confabulation and Hallucination: Models frequently make things up and people use models to deceive others. Are humanists in a particularly good position to theorize the nature of confabulated model outputs as well as the uses/abuses to which models might be put?

If you are interested in contributing an article to this special issue, please submit a **500-word proposal/abstract by November 30, 2024 by email to richard.so@mcgill.ca with “MFS SPECIAL ISSUE” in the email title.** We will notify you of our decision by December 31, 2024. For accepted proposals, **final manuscripts will be due by September 1, 2025.**